

# Comment

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## The Potential Contribution of Psychology to Nuclear War Issues

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In his article, "Toward a Policy-Relevant Psychology of Avoiding Nuclear War: Lessons for Psychologists From the Cuban Missile Crisis" (January 1987), James G. Blight has provided a critique of some of the psychological literature dealing with nuclear war issues, particularly nuclear depth psychology. In this comment, we look at the relevance of psychology to nuclear war issues by identifying some areas in which psychology could potentially make important contributions. As economists with long-standing interest and involvement in nuclear war issues, it has frequently occurred to us that many of the critical issues in this field are fundamentally psychological in nature and should be addressed by psychologists.<sup>1</sup> Yet

<sup>1</sup> It is important to recall that the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Constitution, adopted immediately after World War II, declares:

"That since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defenses of peace must be constructed."

Despite such clear declarations pointing to the importance of psychological issues, the field of strategy and arms control and, more generally, issues of war and peace have been dominated by political scientists, lawyers, historians, economists, physical scientists, and so on, with the notable absence of all but a relatively small number of psychologists.

it appears that relatively little work of this type, with certain notable exceptions (Blight, 1987; Deutsch, 1983; Oppenheim, 1984; Solomon & Marston, 1986; Tetlock, 1986; Thompson, 1985; White, 1986), has been performed by psychologists (for some classic contributions, see Bramson & Goethals, 1986). Indeed, psychological factors in this crucial area are frequently overlooked or ignored.

This comment suggests an agenda of nuclear war issues that could, and perhaps should, be addressed by psychologists. These issues are critical ones for a potential nuclear war; thus, psychologists could make a major contribution by analyzing them. What follows are brief descriptions of nine such issues, which are neither mutually exclusive or exhaustive.

### The Nuclear Arms Race

The nuclear arms race, particularly United States-Soviet strategic weapons interactions over the last three decades, is, to a large extent, driven by psychological factors (see Bennett & Dando, 1983; Childstrom, 1984; Frank, 1982; Kennan, 1982; Kull, 1985; Lifton & Falk, 1982; Mack, 1985; Pilisuk, 1984; Plous, 1985; Solomon & Marston, 1986). Of particular importance and reinforcing one another as impulses for the nuclear arms race are fears and mistrust of the other side, misperceptions of both capabilities and intentions of the other side, fear of appearing to be "weak" or not showing proper resolve, and the tendency to underestimate one's own capabilities but at the same time to overestimate the opponent's capabilities. The last factor has led historically to the alleged "bomber gap" and "missile gap," both of which were later proven to be nonexistent. More recently, it also led to the alleged "window of vulnerability," which was also shown later to be nonexistent. At other times, however, there have been reverse tendencies of overestimating one's own capabilities or underestimating enemy capabilities. Psychologists could address these issues, perhaps extrapolating from results on interpersonal interactions and from experiments or simulations or perhaps developing newer approaches. Questions to be answered include the following:

How do perceptions and misperceptions influence arms buildups? How are misperceptions formed and how can they be corrected? When are perceptual errors likely to be followed by intensification of the arms race, or withdrawal from the race, or actual conflict?

### Attitudes Toward Other Nations

One of the psychological factors that fuels the nuclear arms race, but one that should be studied specifically, is attitudes toward other nations. Why does the United States fear Soviet nuclear weapons but not British or French nuclear weapons, given the potential for nuclear accidents and given the potential worldwide consequences of nuclear war? Why does the Soviet Union fear China and Germany perhaps even more than the United States? What accounts for the virtual revolution of U.S. attitudes toward China? Can Sino-Soviet relations be explained, in part, on the basis of psychological factors? These and other psychological factors in attitudes toward other nations, both nationally and on the part of national leaders, could perhaps provide partial explanations not only for the nuclear arms race but also for the existence of the cold war, the rise and fall of detente, attitudes toward arms control negotiations, and the potential contribution of confidence-building measures. Of course, there are real, as well as psychological, factors at work in each of these cases. Questions to be answered include the following: What psychological factors affect or determine attitudes to other nations? How are these attitudes changed over time? Can one distinguish between rational and irrational fears?

### Deterrence

Deterrence is, to a large extent, a psychological phenomenon (Brodie, 1959; Jervis, 1976; Jervis, Lebow, & Stein, 1985). Restraining one's opponent from striking by relying on the opponent's fear of a retaliatory strike, which is the essence of deterrence, is *doubly* psychological—it depends on one side's belief about the fears of the other side. Fear is an especially important component of deterrence, and it can be a valuable force if it is rational and



enforces socially desirable behavior, as in the case of mutual deterrence. Sometimes, however, excessive fear can cause psychological harm and socially destructive behavior. Deterrence deserves a detailed analysis by psychologists. Questions to be answered include the following: Does deterrence work? What is the role of fear in influencing behavior? Is this fear rational or irrational? Is it socially valuable or destructive? How many weapons are required to deter an opponent? What are the consequences of an excess number of weapons over those required to deter? How does deterrence change over time? How can deterrence possibly be strengthened or eroded? How is deterrence influenced by various arms control measures?

### Arms Control Negotiations

Psychological studies of dyadic interactions and of small group behavior should be of value in analyzing and explaining bilateral United States-Soviet arms control negotiations (Etzioni, 1967; Fisher & Ury, 1981; Louche, 1975; Morley & Stephenson, 1977; Osgood, 1962; Sherif, 1962; Tysoe, 1982). These include the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks (SALT) and the Strategic Arms Reduction Talks (START), where it should be emphasized that the final "T" in both SALT and START refers to "talks," with the intent of changing perceptions and attitudes, and not to "treaties." Psychological approaches could also be used to study negotiations, using, for example, results of small group interactions. Questions to be answered include the following: What roles do psychological factors play in these negotiations? How do attributes and perceptions of national leaders influence these negotiations? What are the influences of psychological factors on the choice of an agenda and of a particular forum in which to negotiate?

### Defense-Related Decisions

Psychological factors play a role (in some cases a major role) in defense-related decisions, particularly those taken by national leaders. For example, General Charles de Gaulle's decision to develop an independent French nuclear force and to remove France from the NATO integrated military structure was based in part on his doubts about the credibility and reliability of U.S. nuclear guarantees in Europe and also in part on his pride and on his desire to restore France to great-power status, both of which are psychological in nature. More recently, President Ronald Reagan's decision to embark on the strategic defense initiative (SDI) was based, in

part, both on national fears of nuclear weapons and on his own concern over the decisions that any American president would have to make in the event of a nuclear war. A specific decision that deserves study in its own right is the one to develop nuclear weapons. All nuclear stockpiles that exist owe their existence to a specific decision made by an individual national leader, as opposed to a decision made by a collective body, such as a legislature, or nationally. A study of the psychology of these past decisions, with complementary comparative studies, could be valuable not only in understanding these past decisions but also in analyzing, predicting, and suggesting mechanisms for possibly controlling future decisions to develop nuclear weapons. These and other major defense-related decisions can and should be studied from a psychological perspective. Questions to be answered include the following: What were the psychological factors on which these decisions were based? How do these factors change over time? Would different leaders have made very different decisions?

### Crisis Behavior

The behavior of national leaders in a crisis situation will determine whether the crisis becomes worse or moves toward a resolution. Psychologists can analyze and predict behavior in a crisis situation (Brecher, 1978; Hermann, 1972; Holsti, 1972; Janis, 1982; Oppenheim, 1984; Paige, 1972; Snyder, 1972; Ury, 1985; Wilkenfeld & Brecher, 1982), particularly crisis decisionmaking, which would be extremely valuable in understanding crises of strategic importance. For example, the Cuban Missile Crisis of October 1962 was resolved without even a major military incident due to certain key decisions made by Kennedy and Khrushchev. In particular, Kennedy responded to one message from Khrushchev, even though he knew it had been followed by a later contradictory message, while Khrushchev was willing to remove Soviet missiles from Cuba, given the U.S. offer not to invade Cuba and to remove its missiles from Turkey. As another example, Soviet leaders defused a potential crisis situation after the assassination of President Kennedy by imposing a grounding of all military aircraft so as to signal to the United States that it would not take advantage of the decapitation situation. By studying human behavior in these and other crisis or potential crisis situations, psychologists can give insight and perhaps guidance in future crisis situations. Questions to be answered include the following: How do leaders be-

have in crisis situations? At what point does erratic or irrational behavior occur? What mechanisms exist to promote intelligent choices in crisis situations?

### War Outbreak

Psychologists can give insight into future potential war situations by studying the behavior of key decision makers in past wars. Whether due to premeditated attack, preemption, escalation, a widening crisis situation, or some other cause, all war outbreaks involve human behavior and decisions, especially perceptions and misperceptions, which should be analyzed using the approaches and methods of psychology. Questions to be answered include the following: What are the various ways in which wars occur, and what are the psychological factors involved in each? What are the expectations of national leaders involved in war outbreak decisions? What are the rational and what are the irrational aspects of such decisions?

### Accidental Nuclear War

A future war possibly could be triggered or escalated on the basis of accidents. Indeed, if mutual deterrence works to restrain a deliberate war, then some probable causes of war include accident or inadvertent or misinformed action. The triggering incident could be technical (e.g., computer failure) or behavioral (e.g., errors made by sensors operators or weapons operators), and the latter could be studied by psychologists. In either case, however, the response to the triggering incident could be studied using the approaches of psychology. Past accidents involving operator errors, such as those of Three Mile Island and Chernobyl, could be fruitfully studied by psychologists (on accidents see Perrow, 1984; on accidental nuclear war see Bracken, 1983; Britten, 1983; Cull, Erskine, Haug, Roper-Hall, & Thompson, 1983; Dumas, 1980; and Frei, 1983; on Three Mile Island, see Flynn & Chalmers, 1980, and Kemeny, 1979; on Chernobyl, including a discussion of psychological factors, see Ramberg, 1986-1987). Questions to be answered include the following: What are the psychological conditions involved in accidents? Under what circumstances are they most likely? How does a crisis situation affect the chance of accident?

### Crisis and Conflict Prevention, Management, and Resolution

The prevention, management, and resolution of crisis and conflict is another area in which psychologists can make a valuable contribution. All involve behavior, human decision making, interpersonal in-



teractions, perceptions, and misperceptions that have been treated in psychology (for psychological studies of crisis prevention, management, and resolution, see Burton, 1979; Hamburg & George, 1984; and Morley & Stephenson, 1977). One of the techniques of crisis/conflict prevention, management, and resolution is prior agreements. An example is the 1971 United States-Soviet Accidents Measures Agreement; the Soviet Union notified the United States immediately about the explosion and fire on its nuclear weapons carrying submarine in the Atlantic in October 1986, in full compliance with this treaty, and in contrast to its delayed notification of surrounding nations about the April 1986 accident at Chernobyl. A second technique is signaling, as in the Soviet response to the assassination of President Kennedy. A third is negotiation, as in the Cuban missile crisis. A fourth is mediation involving a third party. A fifth involves nonmilitary threats or pressure. A sixth technique involves military threats or military activities at various levels of intensity. These and other techniques of crisis/conflict prevention, management, and resolution could be fruitfully studied by psychologists. Questions to be answered include the following: What are the psychological factors involved in crisis or conflict prevention, management, and resolution? What techniques of crisis/conflict resolution are most appropriate in specific situations?

### The Potential Contribution of Psychology

Psychologists can make a major contribution to an understanding of nuclear war by studying these nine issue areas. Certain common themes arise in many of them; these are topic areas in which psychologists have expertise, and they can bring this expertise to bear on questions of crucial importance. Such questions include decision making, particularly under stress; fear generated denial, which may distort reality and paralyze needed actions; perceptions and misperceptions; dyadic interactions; small group behavior; and psychological reactions to stress and fear. Psychologists can analyze these factors and how they bear on the presence of nuclear weapons and the potentiality for nuclear war via historical case studies, interviews of participants, comparative studies, inferences from related situations, simulations of crisis and negotiations situations,<sup>2</sup> labo-

ratory studies, clinical studies, and other such approaches. It may well be that at this point psychology, perhaps more than any other discipline, can give insights into this crucial area.

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<sup>2</sup> The University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) Center for International and Strategic Affairs has used simulations to teach about crises and negotiations. Crisis simulations have dealt



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## In Defense of Nuclear Depth Psychology

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According to James Blight (January 1987), psychologists concerned about the risk of nuclear war have had little or no influence on nuclear weapons policy because the psychologists and policymakers "speak different languages of nuclear risk" and their "psychological realities . . . are thus very different" (p. 13).

Blight was amazed by the "virtual unanimity" (p. 15) of opinion among psychologists who have written about the arms race. He called their emerging paradigm "nuclear depth psychology." The "essential ingredients" of this perspective were said to be the beliefs that (a) the arms race creates a dangerous risk of nuclear war and (b) "a pathological superpower relationship—defective patterns of interaction . . . provide, as it were, the psychological fuel for the arms race" (p. 12).

Blight's thesis that the psychologists' "premises are totally alien, psychologically completely unreal, to those who actually manage the nuclear risks" (p. 14) implies that the nuclear policymakers, like the psychologists, are nearly unanimous in

their opinions. He provides no evidence to support that assumption. In reality, nuclear policymakers and analysts are a heterogeneous group. Nuclear depth psychology may be incommensurable with the psychological reality shared by Reagan, Bush, Nitze, Perle, Adelman, and Weinberger, but other nuclear policymakers in prior administrations have described the arms race in much the same language as the psychologists.

For example, Paul Warnke, director of the U.S. Arms Control and Disarmament Agency in the Carter administration and chief U.S. negotiator on the SALT II Agreement, stated,

I submit there are better ways to communicate with the Soviet Union than by building up more and more and more dangerous weapons. . . . We are now living on borrowed time, all of us. I recognize that there are international problems of great importance. But they must not be allowed to obscure the urgency of this issue, or the gravity of the danger to our survival. . . . I urge the Congress to support the nuclear freeze resolution. (quoted in Kennedy & Hatfield, 1982, p. 226)

Many other nuclear policymakers and analysts have also accepted the central principles of nuclear depth psychology. The Kennedy-Hatfield resolution, which states that "the nuclear arms race is dangerously increasing the risk of a holocaust" and calls for "a complete halt to the nuclear arms race" was endorsed by the following policymakers and analysts in 1982: George Ball; Hodding Carter; Clark Clifford; William Colby; Rear Admiral Thomas Davies; William Foster; J. William Fulbright; Morton Halperin; W. Averell Harriman; Henry Cabot Lodge; Herbert Scoville, Jr.; Marshall Shulman; Gerard Smith; John Steinbruner; Thomas J. Watson, Jr.; Herbert F. York; and many others (Kennedy & Hatfield, 1982, pp. 173-181). The major Democratic presidential contenders in 1984 (i.e., Mondale, Hart, Jackson) favored a nuclear freeze and major reductions in nuclear weapons.

The central principles of nuclear depth psychology are also commensurable with the views of certain influential policymakers in the Soviet Union. Georgy Arbatov, member of the Central Committee and advisor on U.S. affairs and arms control to Mikhail Gorbachev, has written,

Present trends in the arms race tend to make nuclear war not only possible but probable and, under certain circumstances, even inevitable. . . . To prevent a nuclear war involves much more than a lack of a desire to start war. . . . it is necessary to restructure in a fundamental way the existing system of international relations. This restructuring would involve ending the arms race, establishing an atmosphere of trust,

expanding the dialogue, and promoting just and mutually beneficial cooperation around the world. (Arbatov, 1982, pp. 174, 181)

If so many policymakers in the United States and Soviet Union accept the central principles of nuclear depth psychology, why have the superpowers failed to end the arms race? Although the causes of the superpower competition in nuclear weapons are more complex than the causes of conflict between individuals, the interpersonal conflict analogy is not so inappropriate as Blight believed.

Whether a conflict is between groups or individuals, the conflicting parties may be very much aware of malignant relational processes and of the potential for a mutually destructive outcome, but they may still be unable to resolve the conflict. The superpowers have failed to end the arms race because policymakers are significantly influenced by the same psychological variables that cause maladaptive interpersonal behavior, even when such behavior is recognized as self-defeating.

Some of the perceptual, cognitive, and motivational variables that influence arms race behaviors have been identified by the nuclear depth psychologists (e.g., Deutsch, 1983; Frank, 1982; White, 1984). Psychologists have also identified characteristics of political and economic institutions that provide economic incentives and structure political influences and power maintenance tendencies in ways that support arms race behaviors (Deutsch, 1983; Nelson & Beardsley, in press).

The nuclear depth psychologists have further suggested new ways of thinking about national security (e.g., as requiring mutual security, in cooperative rather than competitive terms). They have also offered empirically tested principles for conflict resolution through negotiation and conciliation. Other social scientists have provided similar analyses and proposals (e.g., Jervis, 1976; Lifton & Falk, 1982).

Whether the psychologists and other social scientists have had much influence on the behavior of policymakers is hard to know. Blight asserted that they have had no noticeable impact (p. 18), but his assertion is difficult to prove, especially because policymakers have frequently spoken and behaved in a manner consistent with the social scientists' suggestions.

Blight acknowledged that John F. Kennedy's use in 1963 of the conciliatory strategy embodied in the Graduated and Reciprocated Initiatives in Tension Reduction (GRIT) proposal was successful in the short run. Blight was pessimistic about the future use of this strategy because the process of reciprocated initia-



tives begun by Kennedy did not continue beyond a few months.

It is possible, however, to evaluate the period from the early 1960s to the late 1970s in a more positive way. The superpowers did agree to stop testing nuclear bombs in the atmosphere, to prevent an arms race in defensive weaponry (ABM treaty), and to set limits on bombers and missiles (SALT I & II). Progress was also made in negotiations to control and eventually cease underground testing. During a 15-year period, significant steps toward controlling the arms race were made, and these achievements created momentum for further progress in limiting the arms race and reducing nuclear weapons.

Unfortunately, the introduction by the United States of multiple independently targetable reentry vehicles (MIRV) technology in 1970 and U.S. failure to negotiate a prohibition of its use led to a rapid increase in the number of deployed warheads and a major decline in crisis stability. Then, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, the election of Ronald Reagan, and the appointment of policymakers who opposed cooperation with the Soviet Union ended the momentum that had developed for arms control in the 1960s and 1970s (Scheer, 1982).

This brief historical review and the statements of policymakers quoted previously show that, although the central principles of nuclear depth psychology have not influenced all policymakers, they have affected the behavior of some policymakers. Blight's pessimism about the incompatibility between the views of nuclear depth psychologists and policymakers is unwarranted.

Blight also exaggerated the extent to which policymakers have rejected the interpersonal relations analogy for describing the arms race. He concluded that, in the policymakers' view, hate, trust, and empathy "have little or nothing to do with international relations" (p. 18). He quoted the following statement from George Kennan as an example of this perspective: "Its (government's) primary obligation is to the *interests* of the national society it represents, not to the moral impulses that individual elements of that society may experience" (quoted in Blight, 1987, p. 18).

Kennan's distinction between a society's interests and the moral impulses of individuals within that society hardly entails a rejection of the psychological model. Only persons have interests or impulses, except by analogy. Kennan's use of the depth psychologists' relational pathology analogy for the arms race was very explicit when he wrote in 1981,

I see this competitive buildup of armaments conceived initially as a means to an end but soon becoming an end itself. I see it taking possession of men's imagination and behavior, becoming a force in its own right, detaching itself from the political differences that initially inspired it, and then leading both parties, invariably and inexorably, to the war they no longer know how to avoid. (quoted in Kennedy & Hatfield, 1982, p. 233)

Blight's conclusions about the irrelevance of nuclear depth psychology seem to be based more on his cynical and pessimistic assumptions about human nature than on logic or evidence. This is apparent in his major arguments, including the following: Because Kennedy's use of a GRIT strategy failed to reverse the arms race in 1973 and because GRIT has not been used much since then, it is therefore unfeasible and "wide of the mark of policy relevance" (p. 14). Because our thoughts about national security are determined in significant ways by biology and culture, "the prescriptions of nuclear depth psychology . . . really are irrelevant and likely to remain so" (p. 23).

Even if humans are biologically predisposed to choose competitive rather than cooperative policies (which is debatable) and even if conciliatory strategies have not been used frequently by the superpowers, GRIT is still a feasible alternative for policymakers who genuinely want to reduce tensions, reduce armaments, or freeze certain aspects of arms competition. This is confirmed by some recent events. In 1983, the Soviets unilaterally stopped testing their antisatellite (ASAT) system and asked the United States to reciprocate. Policymakers in Congress eventually forced the Reagan administration to do so.

In August 1985, Gorbachev declared a unilateral moratorium on underground testing of nuclear weapons, which lasted until February 1987. Again, the United States was asked to reciprocate. The House passed a bill in August 1986 that would have required reciprocity, but the final Defense Authorization bill for 1987 reflected House-Senate compromises that allowed underground testing while continuing the ban on ASAT testing.

Although the use of a GRIT strategy has not been successful in every case, it is one of several viable methods for resolving conflicts. Psychologists should persevere in encouraging policymakers to use the principles of conciliation, negotiation, and crisis management that have been shown to be effective in our research and practice.

If psychologists have had little impact on national security policy, it is not because their analyses and prescriptions are

incompatible with the conceptual world of policymakers. It is because (a) psychologists' interest in nuclear weapon issues has been "sporadic" with long periods of "quietude" (Morawski & Goldstein, 1985); (b) their efforts to affect policymakers have been meager; and (c) their work on this issue has focused primarily on public attitudes and opinions, psychological effects of the arms race, education, and citizen activism.

Indeed, there is much we can do as psychologists to educate citizens and the policymakers of the future, to assist organizations attempting to influence public opinion, and to help elect policymakers who recognize that the risks of nuclear competition are much greater than the risks of mutual arms control and arms reductions (see Wollman, 1985, for an elaboration of psychological applications to peace activism). We can continue these efforts and, simultaneously, urge policymakers to use the principles and policy proposals of what Blight has called "nuclear depth psychology."

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## Defining the Boundaries of "Policy-Relevant" Research: A Comment on Blight

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Blight (January 1987) made a convincing argument that depth psychologists have erred in generalizing about conflicts between nations on the basis of an understanding of individual and small group pathology. International conflicts may indeed center around the competing interests of the parties, rather than the psychological needs and motives of individual policymakers. However, Blight's advocacy of a "crisis learning" approach—seeking understanding of decisionmakers' crisis behavior via reconstructed accounts—is of questionable merit on both methodological and conceptual grounds.

The key questions one may ask about a foreign policy based on "national interests" are (a) How do these interests come to be defined and articulated by policymakers, and (b) how do policymakers arrive at strategies for defending them? The answers to both of these questions involve key psychological variables, including personality, perception, and cognition. Restricting the investigation of these variables to policymakers' accounts of their crisis behavior (as Blight advocated) would be counterproductive. Such accounts are likely to be heavily influenced by their author's self-presentation needs (e.g., Schlenker, 1980; Snyder, 1977), by "constructive" processes in recall of actions and states of mind (Loftus, 1980), by consistency with schema-relevant information (Hastie & Kumar, 1979; Hemsley & Marmurek, 1982), and so on.

An analysis of crisis events based on policymakers' accounts is thus likely to yield a portrait that policymakers will willingly read (because, unlike the kinds of critiques that Blight targeted, it will not disturb their presuppositions) but that will bear no necessary correspondence to the psychological realities imposed by crisis situations. Any "insights" one might glean from such an information base will be of limited usefulness to future crisis participants. It is difficult to understand why we as psychologists should set aside other research methodologies (e.g., laboratory findings and historical case studies) to pursue "policy-relevant" knowledge that has such a shaky empirical foundation.

The more serious issue here regards the proper role of psychologists vis à vis the policy community. Blight contended that policymakers' refusal to read psychological accounts of their activity demonstrates the irrelevance of psychological

approaches. There are several alternative possibilities. One is that policymakers' reading preferences parallel our own: Critical analyses of one's attitudes and actions is no one's favorite subject (How many college teachers take the time to read their students' evaluations of their teaching each semester?). Another possibility is that policymakers do not share psychologists' optimism about the potential for improving the policymaking process. Finally, this group may share Blight's fatalistic view that crisis management is the best we can hope for, given the intractable aggressiveness of our "animal nature" (a view that, in its own way, is as speculative—and as reductionist—as those of the "psychopathology" school whom Blight disdained).

As researchers, we must establish the "relevance" of a paradigm, not by popular vote of our subjects, but by the goodness of fit between the paradigm and empirical reality within a specified domain. According to this standard, the most rigorous work to date has been done by those who have examined policymakers' errors as the product of biases and limitations in human information-processing capability—not as the result of individual or group pathology (Blight chose to paint both camps with the same brush). The critiques of the former are linked to insights from cognitive psychology that have the potential for transforming our view of ourselves as social entities (cf. Fiske & Taylor, 1984). Included here are questions of how we, as individuals and as groups, make evaluative judgments about others; of how we assign explanations to our own versus others' actions; and of the ways in which others' attitudes and behaviors can be conditioned upon our own.

This line of research strongly suggests that our construction of social reality is arbitrarily constrained (by social convention), inadvertently self-fulfilling, and largely theory driven as opposed to data driven. We adopt a story-line for interpreting the world; furthermore, we tend to get emotionally attached to it over time. Researchers have documented these tendencies among policymakers as they seek to define "national interests" and to translate these into policies (e.g., Janis & Mann, 1977; Jervis, 1976; Lebow, 1981; for a recent review, see Tetlock, 1986). It is important to emphasize, however, that these tendencies are not unique to policymakers, and certainly not (as our critiques often imply) to U.S. policymakers. These strategies for processing social information make all of us (including psychologists!) susceptible to tunnel vision in our conceptions of appropriate foreign policy goals and methods.

Certainly a broader awareness, among policymakers and public alike, of the foundations of our world views has the potential to liberate us from tunnel vision and make us more receptive to alternative frames of reference for understanding both our own behavior and that of "the other side." Indeed, Gergen (1982) has argued persuasively that such questioning of the conventional wisdom is the most valuable contribution that social scientists can make to the society. Asking psychologists to forfeit this role for the sake of enhanced "credibility" among policymakers seems ill advised—particularly when our critical perspectives on policymakers' assumptions may, in the long run, influence a wider audience to whom the policy community is ultimately accountable.

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### On the Relevance of Psychology to Preventing War

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In the January 1987 issue of *The American Psychologist*, James Blight (1987) strug-

\* Politics, law, career, social context, (very, loyalty...)  
the driver is the... /



gled to explain why he felt that most other psychologists are approaching the psychology of war and peace in the wrong way and why his preferred approach is the only one with a chance of having useful effects in the real world of political policy. In the course of doing so, he confused a number of issues, but perhaps in a helpful way since his confusions may be widespread.

He began by declaring that there is a "conceptual divide that separates the views" of psychologists "from the policymaker's typical understanding of the requirements for managing and reducing the risk of nuclear war" (p. 13). The focus of the difference, as Blight saw it, is that those he called "nuclear depth psychologists" (a term that includes all of his colleagues with different views from his own, whether they consider themselves "depth psychologists" or not) and "nuclear policymakers and analysts . . . speak different languages of nuclear risk" (p. 13).

I agree with Blight that there is such a conceptual divide, but believe that it is not necessarily focused on the issue of risk (which he considered quite central). Rather, after some debate with Stanley Hoffman (1986a, 1986b; Holt, 1986), a policy analyst to whom Blight looks up, I have come to believe that the difference is at the level called the "operational code" (George, 1969): a set of fundamental beliefs about human nature, the nature of society, and what can be accomplished via political policy. I was first forcibly struck by this point in a discussion with one of Blight's colleagues in the Harvard-MIT community of arms controllers and security policy experts. After we had disagreed on several relatively concrete policy issues, he leaned back and said, "Well, you have to remember, it's a mean, tough world out there." It suddenly struck me that he was adopting the Hobbesian cynicism I had heard from a number of other people who had either recently come from government service or were hoping to enter it soon: The world of international politics is a jungle, and anyone who enters it hoping to act in a morally tenable, internally consistent, or humanly decent way is a loser, sure to be taken advantage of shortly by tougher and cannier opponents.

This outlook, Hoffman informed me in a personal communication, is that of the predominant school of thought in international relations, known as "political realism," although he had referred to it as "the logic of behavior" (see Hoffman, 1986a). Between the lines of his article, Blight (1987) evidently subscribed to this same operational code and saw that most of his fellow psychologists did not, yet he failed to put his finger on this disagreement

as the key to his rejection of their approach.

Instead, he fell back on a number of familiar rhetorical devices: He grouped together everyone with whom he disagreed, disregarding important differences among them and attributing the least plausible positions of some people to the whole group. He dismissed ideas with which he did not agree as "either impossibly ambitious or pitifully inconsequential" without any detailed analysis. Thus, for example, he brushed aside Klineberg's sensible suggestion that American and Soviet psychologists try to get together and come to know one another whenever possible as if it had been suggested as a sufficient means of preventing nuclear war in itself. He dismissed a view he rejected, such as Osgood's (1962) Graduated and Reciprocated Initiatives in Tension Reduction (GRIT), by contrasting it with that of Schelling (1960) as if Osgood had never noticed that such establishment thinkers believed that threats of nuclear annihilation prevent war. Neither Osgood nor many of the other "nuclear depth psychologists" of whom Blight tried to dispose by ridicule is as simplistic or unaware of the arguments against their positions as he would have the reader believe.

Indeed, one of my main disappointments with Blight's article is that he failed to approach most of the issues he discussed on a level that would do justice to the sophistication of the contemporary debate. Thus, many of us with whom he disagreed fully accept the importance of stability and of avoiding crises. In light of the Reagan administration's general position, we are hardly surprised that people who are making political policy today consider that the views of most psychologists are irrelevant, naive, or simply wrongheaded. It does surprise me, however, that Blight wrote as if they—and other security analysts who consider the operational code of "political realism" to be self-evident truth—are not only permanently appropriate voices of the policymaking community but are also the only voices to whom it is worth listening. If psychologists (and others who are more centrally focused on the study of public policy, but who do not share that operational code) come up with sets of policies the establishment considers mere curiosities, that is one thing, but Blight chided us for "policy irrelevance," which is something else again.

Blight correctly recognized the fact that many of us whom he characterized as nuclear depth psychologists take Einstein quite seriously and believe that a new mode of thinking is required if humankind is to survive. It is easy to caricature that

position as the notion that, if we psychologists can start to "think right" and can persuade enough other citizens to join us, war will magically become impossible. Unfortunately, Blight seemed to find it difficult to resist any such easy way to wave aside an opponent's arguments without considering them on their merits.

As I tried to demonstrate in an article (Holt, 1984) he quoted but did not seem to have read attentively, the policymaking community of which he has become a member reaches such conclusions as that deterrence is the best way to keep the peace and that we must learn to live with nuclear weapons, rather than think we could possibly abolish them, by subscribing to a number of (largely implicit) beliefs. I was at some pains to spell them out, for I too thought that a "policy-relevant psychology of nuclear [issues] . . . ought to start with the psychological reality of the policymakers" (Blight, 1987, p. 27). They constitute the "old thinking"; if one takes them as axiomatic, then the arms race becomes not only rationally justified but necessary.

Our central mistake, Blight judged, has been to have taken Einstein too seriously. Even if a viable alternative way of thinking (or operational code) could be devised—a possibility he did not take very seriously—it would be "policy irrelevant" because the only way to make it effective would be the forcible overthrow of the establishment, "which is quite unlikely, or else they must be persuaded that they have been operating all along with the wrong questions and answers" (p. 17). There is another possibility, however: Throw the rascals out by the democratic process. \*

If Blight is still incredulous that any political leader in the contemporary world could subscribe to such Einsteinian ideas as "the new notion of 'mutual security'" (Deutsch, 1983, p. 24), let him begin to read some of the public statements of Mikhail Gorbachev. Not only has he made the call for "a new mode of thinking" as much a slogan of his new administration as *glasnost*, but he has explicitly stated that no one nation can attain security on its own without regard for the security of its adversaries. No wonder Gorbachev has been having such poor luck in dealing with Reagan: He persists in putting forward ideas that Blight has branded as "policy irrelevant!"

I was embarrassed for my friend Jim when I saw him painting himself into that corner, but also by his attempt to explain why "Einstein's cardinal assumption . . . is wrong. Everything has not changed except our thinking" (p. 23). To be sure, the much-quoted statement was hyperbolic,



but it is after all quoted not from a scientific article but from a fund-raising letter, and one should keep the context in mind in interpreting the famous words. Blight continued, however, to explain that "the two most important determinants of our thinking about international security have not changed at all: namely, the biological drives . . . and . . . the nation-state system." How did he know that these are the two most important determinants of our thinking? He did not tell us; certainly he cited no data or other evidence. However, that can easily be explained: No such data exist.

Now suddenly talking like a "depth psychologist" himself and uncritically quoting Freud along with William James, Thucydides, and Hoffman, he presented us with a clear alternative: We either accept that wars cannot be abolished because of inexorable biological realities, or else we have to set about "somehow expunging human aggression" (p. 24).

This is pretty thin stuff. Psychologists are not going to be convinced by having such authorities as James, Freud, and Thucydides cited at them; anyone naive enough to be content with *argumentum ex autoritate* should be impressed with the virtual unanimity of more modern authorities in rejecting this simplistic biological determinism and in declaring that no facts of biology or psychology make war inevitable. Moreover, Blight is too good a Freudian scholar not to know that the master never abandoned his 19th century biology, with its implicit belief in the reality of instincts—of which aggression is allegedly one—and a simplistic evolutionary anthropology for which savage peoples were close to beasts, ravening with instinctive aggression, infinitely inferior to those who brought them the genocidal blessings of civilization. It may be true that "James found in Thucydides ample proof [sic] that there must be a hard core inherited, unalterable [!] aggressiveness own deep in all of us" (p. 23), but that could be little more than a footnote in intellectual history, not a reason to believe in the mythic non sequitur that war is inevitable because anger admittedly has a biological basis. One might, with equal decency, argue that it is impossible to abolish cannibalism because it has a solid biological foundation in two ineradicable motives: hunger and aggression. Besides, we invented it can no more be uninvented than nuclear weapons.

The point, of course, is that human motives are amazingly malleable. We can learn to eat human flesh or pickled jellyfish on a strictly vegetarian diet, and thrive on any of them. Most people in this world

learn to control and contain their anger within reasonable limits, and probably only a small minority of human beings in any age have ever killed another person. Blight's grudging admission of anthropological evidence calls for a detailed rejoinder, but this is probably not the place for it.

Neither of his major arguments contra Einstein can be taken seriously. As to the nation state, Blight failed to note that in historical perspective it is a relatively recent invention or that the tide of recent history has been running in a decentralist and separatist direction. The fact that states are not obviously "dissolving into a pacific world federation" does not mean that such a federation is in principle impossible or that it would be stupid to try to bring it about. *2 15*

In summary, Blight's article was unnecessary as well as a bit misleading. Its central message might better have been put thus: As long as national security policy is in the hands of people like Kissinger, Brzezinski, Schlesinger, Schultz, and Weinberger, the work of psychologists who do not share their world view or operational code will be considered "policy irrelevant" and will be ignored, no matter how clear its actual implications may be for national and international policies. Of course, put that way, the point is a bit too obvious to require an article. Its other principal reason seems to have been self-reassurance, but that is equally unnecessary. Blight's empirical work on the Cuban missile crisis is fascinating and important and will commend itself to the attention of psychologists without needing any preliminary argument that its method (which the author called phenomenological) is indeed legitimate. Indeed, I think it even will be good enough to cause his colleagues to overlook its unfortunate prolegomenon of January 1987.

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### Psychology and War Avoidance: On Blight's Blighted View

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Because Blight (January 1987) quoted my statement of conversion to "the utterly preemptive importance of preventing a nuclear holocaust" (Smith, 1982) in introducing his caustic and overblown put-down of essentially all attempts thus far to apply psychological analysis to the avoidance of nuclear Armageddon, I feel obliged to comment briefly. I have several complaints, besides resenting the imposition of 18 *American Psychologist* pages essentially devoted to showing Blight's sophisticated superiority to everyone else who has dealt with the issue, from Einstein to Janis and Lebow—a mountain of self-indulgence leading to only a mouse of a conclusion. Yes, of course there are things to be learned from Blight's essay, if the reader manages to escape the intent of his rhetoric. However, the very important question of *why* psychological analysis of international conflict in the nuclear age has not been more influential, and *how* to change this state of affairs, deserves better from behavioral scientists.

My first complaint is that Blight lumped careless references to "nuclear madness" by well-meaning psychiatrically oriented commentators together with analyses, such as Deutsch (1983) provided, of the "malignant social process" involved in the escalating arms race. Then, he used the cute pejorative label, "nuclear depth psychology," to dismiss the whole approach. He came closest to serious argument when he confronted Osgood's (1962) Graduated and Reciprocated Initiatives in Tension Reduction (GRIT) analysis with Schelling's (1960) formulation of the classic deterrence position. "It is important to notice," he wrote, "why GRIT and its descendants are so wide of the mark of policy relevance. It is because they represent a 'depth' psychology, an attempt at psychological unveiling of processes that are deeper than the conscious experience of nuclear policymakers" (p. 14). Of course, an analysis of the process of escalating conflict leads beyond the phenomenology



of the participants—but by no means in directions suggested by Blight's sexy label.

As his citation of Schelling reflected, Blight identified whole-hog with the received wisdom of threat and deterrence in the military and arms control policy community. This is my second complaint.

Third, and I could make a diagnostic depth psychological point of it were I so inclined, Blight declared himself for a naively conceived sociobiology of war. "The more we learn about our mammalian ancestors, the less optimistic we ought to become about somehow expunging human aggression" (p. 24)—as if computerized megadeaths were somehow understandable in terms of biological aggressiveness! Of course, I agree with him that the Hobbesian world of nation states cannot be wished away.

Fourth, Blight prematurely dismissed either top-down (from the national leadership) or bottom-up (e.g., the Freeze movement) approaches to reversing the arms race and the escalation of threat. The collapse of recent U.S. policies in the Reagan administration, the shift in the domestic political atmosphere, and the novel initiatives from Gorbachev's Soviet leadership—all new since Blight's writing—leave the political situation a good deal more open now than it can have seemed to Blight. This is no time for psychologists, behavioral scientists, and citizens to give up the attempt to turn things around in Soviet-American relations.

Blight is obviously correct that immense barriers stand in the way of we psychologists getting our most cogent analyses taken seriously by the policy establishment. Also, we can readily stipulate that psychological knowledge or modes of analysis are not by themselves sources of salvation. We urgently need to educate a generation of psychologists to know the arms control community and its arcane lore from the inside so that they can address these issues more competently and persuasively.

In the meantime, as antidotes to Blight's view, I suggest a close reading of Ralph White's (1984) *Fearful Warriors: A Psychological Profile of U.S.-Soviet Relations* (White did his homework in mastering the international relations literature) and of Lloyd Etheredge's (1985) *Can Governments Learn? American Foreign Policy and Central American Revolutions*. Etheredge's portrayal of the assumptive world of "hard-ball politics" that prevails by self-selection and mutual confirmation in the policy community is a better guide than Blight provided to the obstacles that lie in the path of good policy.

We have no grounds for optimism

about the role of psychology in reducing the odds for nuclear war, but fortunately we can be more *hopeful* than Blight was (Smith, 1986). We had better be if we are to do all that we can on this extraordinary issue that involves us all.

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### Must the Psychology of Avoiding Nuclear War Remain Free and Insignificant?

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Psychologists concerned with involving themselves professionally in reducing the risk of nuclear war continue, with only a few exceptions, to live and work in a dream world, a fantasy-land, within which they continue to tell themselves that they are doing just fine, that policymakers are indeed listening, or that, even if they are not, it is simply the bad fortune of nuclear policy types to continue to ignore so much good psychological advice, or that, at the least, psychologists should never give in to the nihilistic pessimism of one such as myself, who seems to have returned from a sojourn in policy-land brainwashed by his new colleagues—the inventors and purveyors of the nuclear arms race. This seems to me to be the gist of the responses to my piece in the January 1987 *American Psychologist* (AP): Whatever we as psychologists are doing that we believe may help reduce the risk of nuclear war, we should just keep doing it as best we can. We should not listen to Blight. I can vouch

for the representativeness of the responses AP has seen fit to print. Since I began writing and speaking on the policy irrelevance of nuclear psychology about a year ago, I have received dozens of letters and phone calls and verbal rejoinders. The main message of these has been: Leave us alone. Let us be, in our cozy world composed exclusively of psychologists. Go back to your foreign policy think tank; turn in your psychological credentials; and stop trying to tell us how to go about our business. I have gotten the message. Except for a few more exchanges like this one, I am finished trying to tell the psychologists of Newcastle that few, if any, in the greater world are interested in buying their coal. I reiterate: There have been some notable exceptions to this rule, but very nearly all psychologists with whom I have had contact about policy relevance and nuclear war have urged me in no uncertain terms to beat it.

At first, I was inclined to disregard the sometimes personal, and almost always parochial, attacks on my remarks. After all, I could hardly be construed as being anything other than a kind of interloper, a hit and run artist, who was perceived as swooping down into the community of psychologists to fling a few arrows their way, only to return to policy-land a while later. However, after some considerable reflection, I have come to regard this "beat it" response of psychologists as just plain irresponsible. So, before taking up a few of the specific criticisms leveled in the rejoinders, I want to try to say why this disciplinary solipsism of the psychology of avoiding nuclear war can no longer be justified. I believe that nearly every psychologist now working in the "field" of avoiding nuclear war got involved in this work out of raw fear that the world was coming apart at the seams and that it would be irresponsible *not* to become involved professionally, to whatever extent possible, in helping to reduce the risk of nuclear war. That is where I began, and that is the point of origin of every psychologist I know who tries to work on questions of nuclear risk. In these few years of activity, however, the fear has been lost, and with it, the sense of urgency that energized so many psychologists in the early 1980s. What we have in its place is a retreat to psychological parochialism, to "professionalism," to an approach to the psychology of avoiding nuclear war that treats it as just another potential division of the American Psychological Association (APA), just another slot to fill in large psychology departments, just another job, for which one brings a lunch bucket to work in the morning and takes it home at night.



I believe most psychologists have simply forgotten why there are psychologists working in this area in the first place—because, once upon a time, we all thought the world was in danger and that we might be able to help. The problem—risk of nuclear war—has been swamped by the discipline of psychology. We seem now to be primarily concerned with solving psychological problems, not with reducing the risk of nuclear war. This shift, I have tried to say in various ways, has rendered psychology irrelevant to the process of managing those risks, because the policymakers who do so do not believe that they face psychological problems. Because psychologists have not, by and large, wanted to face *that* problem, they continue to swallow their own tails in an orgy of self-congratulatory but plainly irrelevant activity.

The central collective act for which psychologists must answer is their irresponsible failure to remember what is at stake, and to keep *that* problem primarily in front of their minds, rather than their supposed responsibilities to psychology as such. Milan Kundera has said all this much better than I. Kundera, a Czech emigre living in Paris, has tried to remind us of the truth and profundity of what I call "Kundera's Law": That in order to affect the world of affairs one must have a thickly textured, hands on, complexly informed view of the situation. If one does, then one may call oneself a realist. The alternative is to stand aside from the complex crawl of daily life as it occurs, to spout solutions to whatever problem interests one, and to meet no need greater than one's need to appear brilliant. Kundera wanted us never to forget—indeed, he warned us that it is truly irresponsible to forget—what life was like in his native land before the Nazis overran it, before the Soviets made it a part of their captive Central European Empire. Where Kundera wrote "burden," psychologists ought to read "policy relevance," which, in turn, is (or was) required by the sense of great nuclear danger. According to Kundera,

The heaviest of burdens crushes us, we sink beneath it, it pins us to the ground. But . . . the heavier the burden, the closer our lives come to the earth, the more real and truthful they become. . . . The absolute absence of a burden causes man to be lighter than air, to soar into the heights, take leave of the earth, and become only half-real, his movements as free as they are insignificant. (Kundera, 1985, p. 5)

He then posed the pivotal question: "What then shall we choose? Weight or lightness?" (Kundera, 1985, p. 5). I contend that psychologists have chosen lightness, that they would rather be free to proffer ingenious psychological solutions to prob-

lems of nuclear risks, rather than to remember why they got into this stuff in the first place, and what that implies for speaking plainly, and with effect, to the people who manage the risks. The burden seems to have been too heavy for most psychologists to bear.

According to Linden Nelson (this issue, pp. 321–322), nuclear depth psychology, the approach to nuclear problems taken by most psychologists working in the area, is working quite well. As evidence, Nelson cites various former policymakers who might be interpreted as favoring policies consistent with those often advanced by psychologists, namely, reversing the arms race, a nuclear freeze, and so on. He also argues that, in fact, the initiatives of 1962–1963, resulting in a lessening of tension between the superpowers and culminating in the signing of the Limited Test Ban Treaty, exemplify the principles in Graduated and Reciprocated Initiatives in Tension Reduction (GRIT), first put forward by Charles Osgood in 1962. He concludes that my conclusions are probably due more to my own cynicism regarding history and thus regarding what we psychologists can accomplish, than any clear-headed assessment of the potential and actual effects of psychology on nuclear risks.

First, an obvious but far from trivial point is that Nelson seems to be arguing that psychology, say Osgood's GRIT, has had actual *influence* on policymakers, as they have been engaged in making nuclear policy. At least it is hard for me to tell whether he is or is not arguing this. If he is, then he is just wrong because neither President Kennedy nor any of his key advisors had ever heard of GRIT in those years. If, on the other hand, Nelson is merely arguing that in this single isolated case, which in his version has become a kind of anthem for psychologists, a process occurred that may be *interpreted* within some psychological framework—what of it? I am sure that behaviorists and psychoanalysts could also, without much trouble, come up with an interpretation of it. Even if, by some method of analysis unknown to me, it could be proven that Nelson's interpretation was the correct one, what can be concluded from this? As far as I can see, all one can say is that once in a while nuclear policymakers actually behave according to psychological principles that are reasonably well understood. It is important to note, however, that this in no way makes any connection between the world of psychology and the world of policy making. Thus, there is no way for psychology to move from the interpretation to having a really causal effect next

time. Psychology remains just a clever epiphenomenon.

A more serious argument is Nelson's claim that many former policymakers seem to endorse principles that adhere to psychologists' pronouncements. This is quite true, but it is instructive to note that Nelson, like most psychologists, fails to note that these people are *former* policymakers. His failure to note this makes an enormous difference. The point should not be that the various members of the Reagan administration Nelson nominates as princes of darkness are, in some sense, the inverse of psychological wise men when it comes to reducing nuclear risks. The point is that they have not behaved much differently, really, from many policymakers who preceded them. I have no interest in defending the Reagan administration, whose approach to arms control has been the diplomatic equivalent of the free market economy they all seem to cherish, that is, no one is really in charge of it. However, Nelson would do well to dwell on the fact that, when all the bright lights cited by him as arms control "good guys" were in office, they often sounded and acted much differently than they have since leaving the government. The point is hardly to slam the former policymakers to the mat. It is rather to emphasize, forthrightly, that the "burden" carried by the policymaker is in most respects far greater than that of the analyst, who may or may not be a former policymaker. The analyst is much freer to soar into the heights, to recommend and suggest to the limit of his or her creativity. However, the policymaker within the government, who is charged with *responsibility* for making fateful decisions, may behave much differently, in line with the thicker, more burdensome, but ultimately more influential position he or she is likely to have. In short, contrary to Nelson's lighter-than-air analysis of the current state of the psychology of avoiding nuclear war, it is clear that psychology can take none of the credit for any nuclear policy, and none for any pronouncement some former policymaker may have made that seems to comport well with one's favored psychological principles. If one is satisfied with what seems to satisfy Nelson—essentially correlation rather than causality in reducing nuclear risks—then I believe one asks far too little of oneself and the discipline. In fact, one asks nothing at all.

Walter B. Earle (this issue, p. 323) takes a more defiant approach. It is unclear to him whether psychology is *policy irrelevant* to the risk of nuclear war, but he is not all that concerned about it. As I read his rejoinder, it is the science of psychology that will ultimately make the salutary dif-



ference. This view is reflected in two ways. First, he is obviously intent on establishing distance between his field, cognitive psychology—the *science* of cognitive psychology—and the articulations of various clinicians who have gotten involved in the field. He seems willing to grant that clinicians are nuclear depth psychologists, but that he and his colleagues in cognitive science are not. Although Earle may believe this, policymakers make no such distinctions. Second, Earle believes that relevance is a rather straightforward matter of doing the best science and letting the world of nuclear policy making (in this case) take notice whenever they can no longer ignore the findings. He honestly states his inability to understand why, as I suggested, he ought to set aside well-developed psychological research strategies in order to begin phenomenologically within the framework of the problems as perceived by the policymakers. As a cognitive psychologist, he believes strongly that policymakers must be just like the rest of us, in that they have a set of biases that must be decoded before we can make any objective sense out of them. This is why what he calls my “crisis learning” approach is the wrong place to start. I seem unaccountably to want to buy into the system of the policymakers, lock, stock, and barrel, including the biases that are embedded therein. His question is, Why?

Kundera indirectly provided the answer. By posing as the nuclear psychologist defiant, Earle avoids having to deal with the burden of operating in the real world of policy making. He is just not interested in the world beyond his psychological literature, a fact one can surmise by perusing his 12 references, all of which are to psychologists, or to political science treatises uniquely embedded in psychology. More telling evidence of Earle’s irresponsible forgetting of the problem that ought to be addressed, however, may be found in a recent piece of his in *Political Psychology* (Earle, 1986). The key passage is worth citing in its entirety, for it reveals a great deal about the extent to which Earle’s critique is rooted in a dream world composed of psychologists and, it turns out, their students as well. Earle asked his students to participate in a role-playing game, in which they negotiated as “Soviets” and “Americans.” This was his analysis:

Their tone of earnest sincerity was in stark contrast to the kind of elaborate posturing, deceitfulness, and strategic “positioning” that usually characterizes this kind of endeavor at the diplomatic level. Having translated the arms race into its smallest constituent parts—the feelings of individual Soviet and American citizens—they had stripped away the layers of pretense

and revealed the rigidly arbitrary nature of their country’s “party line.” After the role play had ended, the students pressed me to admit that, if the political and military leaders on both sides were removed from the picture, much of the current conflict between the two countries could be settled by a consensus of common citizens from both sides. (Earle, 1986, p. 370)

Based on these considerations, Earle is emboldened by the end of the article to “set forth an alternative framework within which international relations could be conducted” (Earle, 1986, p. 374). By refusing to begin where the policymakers must begin, by beginning instead with the world of his undergraduate students and informed by some introductory psychology, Earle has decided to reinvent international relations. As a purely theoretical enterprise, this is unobjectionable. However, if he believes that this ought to be the prerequisite to reducing the risk of nuclear war, how long does he believe it will take to reinvent the wheel with which leaders drive international politics? If the answer is the correct one—forever!—what has happened to the memory of the fear that drove us all as psychologists to work in this area in the first place? It seems to have been conveniently and irresponsibly forgotten.

Robert R. Holt (this issue, pp. 323–325) has written more usefully about Freud than anyone else I know of, living or dead. More successfully and tenaciously than any other interpreter of the Freudian canon, Holt has challenged us to make distinctions: He has urged us not to accept or reject Freud wholly, and has examined in the cold light of his keen analytic mind what in Freud’s work was relatively permanent and what was ephemeral—what, for our day, is wheat and what is chaff. For me, this is what has made Holt’s work on Freud genuinely exciting in ways that secondary interpretations seldom are—his courage in standing up to Freud, rather as if the master were physically present, in order to demonstrate what there is in the work of the great interpreter of dreams that may, itself, be a function of Freud’s own capacity to dream, to wish it were so. Holt has continued to accomplish this selective Freudian demolition in the most respectful way imaginable, by taking Freud seriously, by arguing with him.

This is why Bob Holt’s recent writing on political psychology seems so odd. It is, as I believe his rejoinder demonstrates, an absolutely uncritical endorsement of Einstein’s dream that we will all—because we must—come to see that nuclear weapons have no place, that in fact war is obsolete in any form, and that, to ensure the complete delegitimation of nuclear weap-

ons and war, we must build a world federation—a United States of the world. This is a lovely dream, but it is a dream, one that has been dreamed at least since Plato dreamed up his Republic 2,500 years ago. The point is hardly to condemn it, but rather to dramatize my own confusion as to how the finest, most shrewdly critical interpreter of the grand master of dream interpretation finds himself enraptured by a dream so preposterously at odds with reality and history. One hardly knows how to respond.

Because Holt professes to admire my work on the Cuban Missile Crisis, let me just draw an analogy to it as a partial response to his implied challenge to prove that his dream is only a dream. Several months after the missile crisis, Robert McNamara, in testimony before Congress in January 1963, was challenged by conservative congressional representatives to prove that Soviet missiles were *not* in Cuba. Of course, he could not do it. They could have been “in caves,” as was said at the time, and as presidential candidate Pat Robertson recently (and remarkably) charged. Likewise, I have no way to prove that Holt’s program is an idle dream—that it cannot happen. It could, but should I bet on it? Should I be confident that Bob Holt knows how to get from there to here? Where is the critical attitude with which he has punctured so many of Freud’s dreams, and those of the starry-eyed Freudian legions? Where is the assessment of Einstein, to offset the enthusiasm?

Holt (1984) entitled his seminal piece of political psychology: “Can Psychology Meet Einstein’s Challenge?” One would have expected the foremost critical analyst of Freud to begin, however, by asking: “Should Psychology [attempt to] Meet Einstein’s Challenge?” This step has obviously not been taken.

“In Dreams,” said the poet W. B. Yeats, “begins responsibility” (p. 98). Nikita Khrushchev found this out in the Cuban Missile Crisis. He had a wild and fantastic dream: to emplace nuclear missiles in Cuba; to do so without being discovered; and thereby actually to improve United States–Soviet relations, because John Kennedy would no longer covet Cuba, nor would he entertain (as Khrushchev thought he did) enthusiasm for a first nuclear strike against the Soviet Union. Our recent explorations of Soviet sources suggest that Khrushchev actually believed all this and more. The consequences of his dreaming, as we know, were nearly catastrophic. Only now are the Soviets assuming their share of responsibility for the crisis unleashed on the world by Khrushchev’s preposterous dream. The point I

\* WE neither states nor asked to understand  
nor asks question, Wf.



FALSE

(JFK thought of himself as, withdrawing the nuke by

NO

want to emphasize is that, like Bob Holt's dream, Khrushchev's seems to have had benevolent motives, but because he was unable to step back from his dream and evaluate its prospects realistically, he inevitably came very close to provoking the holocaust his missiles were deployed to prevent. It is far from impossible that Bob Holt's dream, if some one tried seriously to implement it, could have similarly frightening consequences. The nonnuclear world he seeks is not attainable, and we should recall why Khrushchev took his big gamble in Cuba. He only had a few nuclear weapons. He wanted a few more, in a better location. With only a few, or none, on hand, this could easily happen again. Of course, I do not intend to predict any such occurrence, but I urge Bob Holt and his uncritical dreamers to take heed that they not advocate sacrificing the precious safety of this world for the hope of everlasting peace in the world for which they wish.

This brings me, finally, to Brewster Smith's (this issue, pp. 325-326) intemperate but interesting response. According to Smith, the main thing is not to give up hope, not to give in to what he sees as the untoward pessimism of one such as myself. He suggests, in conclusion, that readers ignore me and read Ralph White's (1984) *Fearful Warriors* and Lloyd Etheredge's (1985) *Can Governments Learn?* These authors, according to Smith, are more hopeful than I am. To conclude in this way, however, only shows just how irresponsible psychologists can get in their ostrich-like odyssey back into their literatures, where they are comfortable and hopeful. White's and Etheredge's books are good books, but one ought not to read them as one would read the Psalms, as sources of strength to get them magically through some putative valley of death, but as the source of a more complex, accurate, burdensome understanding of what the nuclear risks really are and what we ought to do about them. As an illustration, if one begins (as I and several of my colleagues have tried to do) where the policymakers began in late October 1962 and one tries to understand why the Cuban missile crisis was resolved when, and as, it was, one comes to some interesting, but somewhat disturbing, conclusions (Blight, Nye, & Welch, 1987). It seems clear that the reason we did not have a war of some

kind by the weekend of October 26-28 is the presence in many of the leaders on both sides of an overpowering fear of inadvertent nuclear war, a war arrived at by some process in which things get out of control and spiral into holocaust. In our interviews, this has come through very clearly, and it is consistent with the facts as they are known. The great fear on that last weekend led to a kind of unprecedented learning: Both sides learned viscerally that they needed to know far more about the situation they were in than they could possibly know. So, they withdrew. We had a Cuban missile crisis instead of a Cuban War or nuclear World War III.

If we pursue this line of reasoning, we can see the plot thicken measurably and, in many ways, uncomfortably. One conclusion is that mutual assured destruction, and the resulting fear that in a crisis the mechanisms of deterrence may become unloosed and the world blown up, may indeed have played a large role in resolving the closest call to a war between the superpowers we have ever had. If, instead of reading about fear and learning as one would take a sleeping tablet, one tries to connect them in the thick texture of real-world events, as they were lived and experienced, one comes to the (for me) uncomfortable conclusion that, in this world, some measure of fear is good, having some nuclear weapons is good, at least to some considerable, and perhaps irreplaceable, extent. Look at what has happened, however. By embedding ourselves as best we can in the burden of nuclear responsibility as that responsibility was felt and discharged, we end up very far from all the standard clichés tossed about by psychologists as formulas for ending the "arms race." The point is that, in so doing, one has tried to enter into, rather than to avoid, the complexity of the nuclear world as given. NOT AN AD FOR THIS!

This, finally, ought to be the goal of all psychologists who recall, or who can be encouraged to recall, why they began to look into nuclear questions: policy-relevant knowledge. Optimism without the knowledge that justifies it is irresponsible. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, a Lutheran theologian hanged by the Nazis, once said that theology, if it is to live significantly, must first die formally, so that it can enter the world that needs it so desperately. The

same is true for psychology now. If it is to have any impact on the risk of nuclear war, psychology as such must die, and psychologists must enter as best they can into the stream of life as it is known to nuclear policymakers. In so doing, the discipline of psychology is unlikely to get any credit for helping out, but its practitioners, a kind of invisible college of people devoted to what James called the science of mental life, will have acted responsibly. They will have remembered why they are doing what they are doing—because, at some moment, the world as we know it could be destroyed in a nuclear holocaust.

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or resulting.  
(see McNamara; for...)  
But he died  
not down there  
K died.  
(Private died  
was not  
expected to be  
enough; nor is  
it plausible  
that it was  
enough, or could  
have been.)

\* by Ridge, etc.?

\*\* i.e. FU threats - of both?

(But what if K had realized that JFK + McN were determined?

\* As JMK's narrative about  
being tried to, "responsible"  
(to the risks, waging, realities?)  
or a requirement for...

\*\*\* in Cuba! (v. Judy!)